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Evaluation: The First Step in Training Cycle

Akinyemi Balogun

Department Of Business Administration, Achievers University, Owo, Ondo State- Nigeria
abalogunng@yahoo.com

Abstract: If organizations (Financial Institution inclusive) intensify and invest a lot on the training of their personnel, this study contends that evaluation, "Integral Part of Training should be senses the "First Step" by Trainers in Training Cycle. The basic objective in evaluation is to assess the effectiveness of a training aid, a kind of feedback by which the trainer is informed about the areas of strength and weakness in the programme and most importantly is the question of investment and commitment to training on the part of government. Evaluation is simply the obtaining of selective information about the effects of training. The value of such information is determined by the use to which it is put. If Evaluation is properly taken care of a more professional approach to training will mean that trainers will not be regarded as trainers unless among other things, they are themselves technically conversant with the methods and techniques of the evaluation of training. The knowledge and the resources committed to training will not then be seen as a waste but as an integral part of training, to deliver a training programme without evaluation is like standing on one foot.

Keyword: *Evaluation, Training, Training Cycle*

1. Introduction

In a discussion on the evaluation of training, we are considering a topic whose financial implications in the Nigerian sense far outstrip in importance its practical benefits. Evaluation may seem to be the final point of the training cycle but it is in a real sense, its first step. Reilly and Clarke (1990) observe that evaluation is "literally, assessing the value of what is being, or has been, done. This value can be in monetary terms, or in terms of social or personal development; or in cost effectiveness or learning effectiveness." In practical terms, however, training evaluation is more often concerned with both cost effectiveness and learning effectiveness. Some authors choose to differentiate between validation (the assessment of whether training has indeed achieved its pre-set objectives) and evaluation (the measurement of the total effect of the training programme) but such a distinction would appear to be rather an academic exercise since it may not be possible to obtain information on the total effects of training. Consequently, training evaluation is concerned with the selection between criteria to be used in evaluating and the establishment of training objectives.

2. Theoretical Framework

Essence of Evaluation

There are, for practical purposes, at least three main reasons why trainers need to evaluate training Programmes. In the first instance, evaluation is necessary in order to assess the effectiveness of a training programme. Secondly, it can be used as a training aid, a kind of feedback by which the trainer is informed about the areas of strengths and weaknesses in the programme. Thirdly and perhaps most importantly is the question of investment and commitment to training on the part of government." Let us remember here, that training is an expensive business. And it always has been. It probably always will be! In 1968, the Federal Government issued a White Paper on the Wolle Report about the training needs of the federal civil service. That White Paper stated in part "training civil servants is a practical approach to improving the efficiency of government. If it is effectively administered; it makes it possible for the civil servant to serve his fellow citizens more efficiently, more effectively and at low cost". The document titled "Statement of Federal Government Policy on Staff Development on the Federal Public Service" has the following key elements:

1. The appointment of Department of Training Officers with responsibility for assessing staff development needs and preparing and implementing programmes to meet these needs;
2. The reorganisation of the Federal Ministry of Establishments to give greater priority to training;
3. Establishment of a Standing Committee on Staff Development;
4. Encouragement of every large ministry/ department to establish a training unit commensurate with its size and function; and
5. The establishment of the Administrative Staff College of Nigeria (ASCON).

Despite the recognition of the need for training and staff development, the PSRC report of 1974 noted that there was deficiency in training programmes throughout the public services. To this end a substantial section of the report was devoted to training. Amongst others, it recommended the "reactivation of the Standing Committee on Staff Development, and the Administrative Staff College of Nigeria (ASCON) and Centre for Management Development (CMD) brought within its coverage." Today, there are not less than forty-seven (47) universities, comprising twenty-five (25) Federal Universities; fifteen (15) state universities and seven (7) private universities. Besides, there are numerous polytechnics and colleges of technology/education to serve as training and development centers for manpower in the country. Most of these institutions have designed or modified their programmes to accommodate the training needs in the public services. According to the public service training document, all arms of the Service are strongly advised to approach the polytechnics and universities, particularly those of technology, with specific requests to design courses that are of special relevance and necessity for their professionals. In recognition of this, the federal government established the Department of Local Government Studies in Ahmadu Bello University (ABU), Zaria; Obafemi Awolowo University (OAU), Ile- Ife; and University of Nigeria (UNN), Nsukka to cater for the training of the ever increasing personnel of the local government councils in their respective catchments areas. The old Institute of Administration in Ife and Zaria were known to train various categories of public servants across the country. In the case of Ife, the institute metamorphosed into a faculty with four departments that are actively involved in manpower training and development. These departments are Public Administration; International Relations, Management and Accounting; and Local Government Studies.

Consequently, the Federal Government set into motion the machinery for the training of its senior civil servants. Again, in 1974 the Federal Government accepted the recommendations of the Public Service Review Commission headed by Chief Jerome Oputa Udoji to the effect that civil service managers should be exposed to training, particularly in certain functional management areas. The purpose was to bring about what the Commission referred to as a New Style Public Service, one that is result - oriented. And the new reforms in the civil service which have now been couched in Decree 43 of 1988 - the Civil Service (Re-Organization) Decree Section 4 (i) It has this to say about training "for the purpose of improving economy and efficiency in the operations of a ministry and raising the standard of performance by employees of their official duties to the maximum level of proficiency, the minister shall establish, operate and maintain Programmes or plans for the training of employees in or under the ministry through government facilities, including training institutions. Philips (1988) further clarifies, training will now be structured so that every civil servant will be exposed to one' type of formal training or the other at specified intervals during his career ... and successful participation in prescribed training course are pre-requisites for crossing from the category of "assistant" to that of "officers" and crossing from being an officer" to being a "director." In the same year, the Federal Government decided to create the position of a Departmental Training Officer (DTO) in every ministry. The responsibility of the DTO would be to draw up training policies and plans and executing them. Such is the seriousness with which government regards training. Even now, the government is in the process of evolving a national training policy. If government has shown such commitment to training and the respective public service organizations (i.e. Ministries and Parastatals) have given expression to this commitment by exposing their officers to the required types of training, then an evaluation of training must be very important indeed.

3. Evaluation Worthiness

Evaluation is simply the obtaining of selective information about the effects of training. The value of such

information is determined by the use to which it is put. Evaluation may itself be expensive and time consuming. It is up to the individual who wants to evaluate to weigh these and other considerations before finally coming to a decision as to whether evaluation is worthwhile or not. Evaluation, at the more precise levels of knowledge, job behaviour and organizational functioning must therefore be made for these and other reasons. Just what are the problems of evaluation? What obstacles stand in the way of effective evaluation by training organizations? Nwankwo (1968) include in his catalogue of problems besetting training in Nigeria a singular "lack of an effective follow- up system of monitoring and evaluating the performance of trainees. Actually, the problems are legion. In the first instance, if we take a look at Training organizations, we find that many of them do not have a real commitment towards training. Their major preoccupation is with how fast they can make their money. A commitment to professionalism is simply nonexistent on their part. Many of these institutions perception of the training function is simply that of an avenue for making easy money. The same goes for many who parade themselves as training professionals. Perhaps, in no other profession is there such an abundance of charlatans as can be found in training. All anyone needs do who has been duly certified a failure in the other professions, it would seem, is simply register with some public or private organization as a professional trainer. For them, training consists merely of making pretensions at knowledge. Secondly, even among the more well- informed individuals and organizations, many pay only lip service to training. In spite of the realization that training is incomplete until evaluated, many training consultants avoid a direct determination of how much knowledge their participants have acquired as a result of exposure to a course of training. As Campbell and Lawler (1970) have correctly observed, though in a different environment, that while millions of pounds are spent on training annually, no penny is spent on training evaluation. Yet, and they are aware of this, evaluation provides a feedback to the trainer, the trainee and the sponsoring organization in its decision making processes.

A casual survey of the effect of training on senior officers of a Lagos bank, for example, reveals that 60% of those who recently attended courses found them adequate in terms of content and applicability; 72% agreed that the training courses attended were responsible for improvements in their performance on the job while 78% observed that there is a marked improvement in their performance on the job. Such valuable information was, until the survey was conducted, lost to both management and trainers. Thirdly, training, in its systematic approach, places a great deal of emphasis on the evaluation stage. Thus, as mentioned earlier, unless training is evaluated, the cycle stands aborted. The fourth reason is that many trainers lack what techniques to use to assess the impact of a training session or methods of evaluating participants. Where they go through the motions of handing out evaluation forms to trainees, they are unable to decipher the meaning of the responses so obtained. Fifthly, these trainers who make a haphazard attempt at evaluation do so at the superficial reaction level. While a reactions evaluation has its advantages especially during an on-going programme, it is dangerous to limit evaluation to that level. It seems that because it is the easiest and simplest kind of evaluation, those who make a pretension at evaluation are not prepared to go any further. A survey of private training consultants in Lagos for example, reveals that almost all those who make an attempt at training often restrict themselves almost exclusively to reactions evaluation. The truth is that the evaluation of management training can shy away from long- term evaluation at the job performance or even organizational levels.

Finally, most Nigerian training outfits are not possessed of the wherewithal for conducting training in its entirety. The resources necessary, both in terms of time and other material and financial resources necessary for effective training evaluation are considered too expensive or a downright waste of time. The impression is often given that the use of such resources would only serve to eat into their profit margins. Trainers ought to be compelled by some central board or authority to conform to certain ethical and work- related behaviour that would enhance the cause of the development of human resources which, in the final analysis, training is all about. As things are at the moment, the field of training is a veritable market place for all comers in which charlatans; ignoramuses, opportunists, and even brigands jostle with one another for a pride of place. If the training profession is going to attract anything near respectability especially from the other professions, it must not be seen as an attractive dumping ground for pretenders and never -do-wells. In addition, trainers in our industrial organizations should impress upon their management the importance of training. Training should not be something tolerated so that at the earliest opportunity, it is the first thing to be slashed when they are hamstrung for money. A proper appreciation of the importance of training by both trainers and the organizations they work for is likely to engender a commitment on the part of all concerned to training. Government commitment to training, to which an allusion has earlier been made, should also inspire a similar commitment on the part of

everybody else touched by the training function.

Furthermore, there is the need to ensure true professionalism in training. Trainers, especially, those who run a consultancy outfit, should come out of the training school and collect the pay check later. There is more to evaluation than reactions evaluation. Taking time out for a proper training evaluation can not really be a waste of time or resources. Nor is it to be regarded as eating into the trainers' profits. To seek to maximize gains by refusing to commit resources to evaluation is to yield to an illusion. The ultimate gains in improved planning and delivery as well as the innate satisfaction derived from doing a job well far outweigh in benefits the resources committed to training. At any rate, professionalism must go beyond making a superficial pass at evaluation. The real trainer should not lose his head because of all those praises that often adorn those sheets of badly-worded forms. Most of those comments do not really amount to much in so far as programme planning and delivery is concerned. Criticism can have a positive value only when it is used to improve one's performance. Such a critical examination can only be had when a rigorous follow-up strategy is adopted. The responsibility for bringing true sanity to this state of affairs must rest, in part at least, with such training regulatory bodies as the Nigerian Institute for Training and Development (NITAD), an organization supposedly created to cater for the interests of management trainers. NITAD must rise to the challenges faced by the profession. Practitioners in the field must be reprimanded.

Training must not be seen as consisting solely of going to the training room to deliver a series of lectures, collecting consultancy fees and checking out in search of the next victim. What all that amounts to is an assault. Evaluation is an integral part of programme delivery. We could go on delivering the same defective programme time and again because we defraud ourselves of the benefits of a feedback which training evaluation ultimately provides. It is this lack of professionalism on the part of many of the outfits around, this total disregard for the relevance or otherwise of what we feed participants, this unwillingness to profit by feedback and this readiness to act the charlatan for a pittance that is at the back of this problem of training evaluation. This problem, if properly taken care of, will also provide a solution to the other problems already identified. A more professional approach to training will mean that trainers will not be regarded as trainers unless, among other things, they are themselves technically conversant with the methods and techniques of the evaluation of training. In addition, the knowledge and the resources committed to training will not then be seen as a waste but as an integral part of training; for to deliver a training programme without evaluation is like standing on one foot.

4. Tools for Manpower Training and Development in Organizations

The tools and methods for manpower training and development in organizations differs, and it is largely determined by the objectives of organizations, the idiosyncrasy of management staff or the chief executive, the organizational policy, as well as the organizational environment to mention a few. Thus, it is a common feature to see methods for manpower training and development varying from one organization to the other, just as a given organization can be tailored at adopting different methods at different times or a combination of techniques at the same time. However, some methods for manpower training and development are stated below:

Orientation: This method of manpower training and development could be said to be an integral part

of the recruitment exercise in that once an employee has been found appointable, it is expected that such an employee need to be positively oriented in line with the vision and aspiration of the organization for effective discharge of function, and since employee function in an organization is basically affected by his perception of the organization vis-à-vis the rules and principles that exist in the organization. It therefore follows that an employee undergoes formal and informal orientation in a place of work. While the formal orientation focuses on job specification and occupational demands placed on the employee, the informal orientation involves the social interaction that takes place in the place of work which could either boost productivity or be detrimental to it (Koontz et al. 1980). The orientation therefore, as a method of manpower training and development. It is quite indispensable because, it helps in boosting the productivity of workers which is needed for competing in the global market of the 21st century.

On the Job Method of Manpower Development: This method is basically different from the orientation method in that while orientation is at the point of entry into the organization or a new assignment; on the

job method is a process through which knowledge and experience are acquired over a period of time either formally or informally. This process involves the following:

1.Coaching: This is a method of on the job training and development in which a young employee is attached to a senior employee with the purpose of acquiring knowledge and experience needed for the performance of tasks (Yalokwu, 2000).

2. Job Rotation: This method either involve the movement of an employee from one official assignment or department to the other, in order for the employee to be acquainted with the different aspects of the work process or through job enlargement – That is given additional responsibility to an employee who has been uplifted as a result of the acquisition of additional skill or knowledge (Yalokwu, 2000 and Lawal, 2006).

3. In House Training: This involve a formal method of on the job training in which skills and knowledge are acquired by employees through internally organized seminars and workshops geared toward updating the workers with new techniques or skills associated with the performance of their jobs (Lawal, 2006).

4. In Service Training: This method involves training outside the organization or workplace in higher institution of learning or vocational centers under the sponsorship of the organization or on terms that may be agreed upon between the organization and the worker (Lawal 2006).

Committee/Work Group Method: This method entails manpower training and development through the involvement of employees in meetings, committees, and work group discussion geared towards injecting inputs in form of decision making as regard solving organizational problem. This method is quite indispensable, especially in the aspect of training employees for managerial functions or heading organizational units.

Vestibule Training Method: This is a method of manpower training and development through the acquisition of skills in a related working environment (Nongo, 2005). Under this method the trainee practices his skill with identical equipment that he uses or he is expected to use in his actual place of work. This method is most suitable for sensitive operations where maximal perfection is expected. The purpose is therefore to enable perfection at work place.

Apprenticeship Method: This method of manpower training and development involve the acquisition of skill through extensive practice for over a period of time by the trainee. This type of manpower development device could either be formal or informal. In the informal environments the trainee is attached to the trainer, and he/she is expected to pay for an agreed period of apprenticeship (Nongo, 2005). In the formal environment on the other hand, an employee of an organization could be placed under apprenticeship in the organization with pay.

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, there is a dire need not only for a regulatory body and, consequently, for a regulatory policy in the training function but also for trainers as professionals to show a commitment to training. Such a commitment will manifest in approaches to training that would result in taking all aspects of training including the matter of training evaluation very seriously indeed because it is on this, at least to some degree, that the quality of our output as professionals and the contributions we make to the development of society depends. This paper have also been able to situate or relate what could be referred to as manpower underdevelopment to socio-economic and political problems in Nigeria by looking at such factors as poverty, political instability and economic underdevelopment. From this background, it is therefore important to conclude that manpower development as a concept and method should be able to take its rightful place as a tool for development in Nigeria through the recognition of the fact that it is the most active and indispensable in the process of production even in the global age of the 21st century. While training and re-training are essential components of manpower development. Manpower development and training play a major, if not decisive, role in promoting economic growth with equity; they benefit individuals, enterprises, and the economy and society at large; and they can make labour markets function better (ILO, 2000). Ideal manpower training and development will no doubt produce economic, social and political growth. It is unfortunate; however, that most training

programmes that have been embarked upon at the various levels of government in Nigeria have not produced the desired results mainly due to attitudinal problems on the part of government and the trainees. The challenge before us is to introduce new orientations on training that will address training contents; training evaluation; attitudes to training and training utilisation. These should be geared towards economic and social growth in the country.

6. Options for Effective Manpower Training and Development in Nigeria

The options for effective manpower training and development in Nigeria could be viewed from two basic perspectives:

1. The option of an enhanced regulatory capability on the part of government for effective enforcement of manpower policies. This is quite indispensable based on the need to ensure quality manpower training and development irrespective of sex, class, ethnic affiliation to mention a few. This point could best be appreciated considering the liberal nature of most government policies which tend to snowball into elitist benefit in terms of policy outcome.

2. The need for government to be persuasive in making organizations embraces well designed policies at improving the training and development of manpower in Nigeria. This could be done both internally and externally. Internally, organizations should be made to see reasons why a careful manpower development plan should form part of their plans and objectives for the financial year. As a matter of fact, the success of organizations should not only be measured in terms of the magnitude of profit through the adoption of outdated personnel administration technique, but, basically on the contribution of the organization in enlarging the confidence of its workers through manpower development. The external factor involves the contribution of organizations to the development of manpower through financial support meant to boost adult education, vocational education, and specialized research institutes to mention a few.

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